

REHEARSAL.

1. Of the Reformed Churches abroad, which are not *Episcopal*, but yet not *Anti-Episcopal*.
2. The Plea of *Necessity* Argu'd, from *David's* Eating the *Shew-Bread*.
3. The *Presbyterians* a very Inconsiderable Party, in Comparison of the *Christian Church*.
4. As great Evidence for *Episcopacy* as for the *Canon* of the *Holy Scriptures*, or the *Articles* of the *Creed*.
5. The Importance of the Subject of *Episcopacy*.
6. Of Altering the Frame of Government Instituted by *Christ*.

SATURDAY, October 25. 1707.

Country-man. **I**N your last, *Master*, you laid it Home upon the Conscience of the *Dissenters*, as you vindicated your own Innocency, and the Sincerity of your Intentions towards them.

(1.) But ther is one Great Clamour they have against the *Doctrin* you have laid down, which Raifes such *Prejudice* in the Minds of many, that if you cannot Remove it, all you have said will be Ineffectual; and tho' they cannot Answer you, yet they will still Oppose you. They say, that by your Argument all the Foreign Reformed Churches which have not *Bishops* are *Un-Church'd*, and put out of the Fold of *CHRIST's* Flock. Which is so very Uncharitable, and of such Dangerous Consequence to the Reformation, that if you shou'd bring a Thousand Demonstrations to Support it, they will not Receive it.

Rehearsal. I have spoke before of the Reformed Churches abroad which are not *Episcopal*, and yet are not *Anti-Episcopal*, that is, whose Principles are not against *Episcopacy*; but their Circumstances, the frame of the Civil Government where they are, and other Necessities they lie under, they say, hinders them from having it. But that they highly Approve it, and wish they might have it. As I have shew'd from *Calvin*, and others of the first Reformers, and from the Church and University of *Geneva* at this Day. Who Condemn our *Dissenters*, and even *Anathematize* them, for setting up against *Episcopacy*, and making a Separation in *England* from it.

(2.) Now if the Necessity of these Foreign Churches be Really and Truly as they Pretend, which they must know better than we, great Allowance will be made for the Case of Necessity, as of *David's* eating the *Shew-Bread*, which otherwise had been Presumptuous in him, and a Sin. And the Countenance which our *Dissenters* Plead from

these Foreign Churches, is the same as if from this Example of *David* others shou'd have set up a Principle, that the *Shew-Bread* was no more *Hallow'd* than any other *Bread*, and that it was Lawful for any, and without any Necessity, to Profane the Temple, and Eat of that *Bread* which it was not Lawful to Eat, but for the *Priests* only. Is it not the same, that from a Necessity, pleaded in *Geneva* &c. our *Dissenters*, without any Necessity, Renounce and Disown *Episcopacy* in it self, and for *Episcopacy* sake?

(3.) But now to put the Case to the utmost Extremity, suppose these Reform'd Churches shou'd, like our *Dissenters*, give up the Plea of Necessity, and stand it out against *Episcopacy* upon a Principle, as *Un-Scriptural*, as an *Usurpation*, and Consequently as *Anti-Christian*. Put the Case thus, and what would be the Consequence? Must the Demonstration of *Episcopacy* from the Beginning fall to the Ground, because so Many had Departed from it, in these later Ages? Must all the Churches in the World be given up in favour of the *Calvinists*? For that is the Case. All others are *Episcopal*, and ever have been so. And what Proportion do's the *Calvinist* Church bear to all the Churches in the *Christian* World? Not so much as a *Mole-Hill* to a *Mountain*. Which then must give Place? Wou'd you throw down a *Mountain* to make Room for a *Mole-Hill*? Wou'd you throw down all *Antiquity*, to make Room for a very Modern Novelty? Wou'd you Reject the Example of the first 1500 years, to Countenance a late *Upstart* in the two last Centuries? If so, let us have a Care how we can Defend the *Creed*, the Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, or any Article of the *Christian Faith*! For do we Believe them any otherwise than as Handed down to us all the way from *Christ* and his *Apostles*, as the *Doctrin* which was once Deliver'd to the *Saints*!

(4.)

(4.) *Country-m.* But you wou'd not put the Faith and the Doctrine of Christ, upon the same Level with Episcopacy?

Rehears. Whatever the Importance of the one or the other may be, the Evidence for them is the same. And in one Point stronger for Episcopacy, as being Matter of Government, which is more Obvious to the Notice of men, and any Change or Alteration in it more Observable than in Doctrins or Opinions. Tho' as I told you before, Doctrins may become Facts, and Proveable the same way; as it is now a Matter of Fact whether such and such Doctrins are Profess'd in the Church of England, what Books are in the Canon of the Holy Scriptures allow'd by her, &c. And thus the Faith and Christian Doctrin is Prov'd throughout all the Ages since Christ. We see what the Faith was which was all along Profess'd in the Church. And thus we Detect the Novel Doctrins of Rome, and of the Settaries among us.

(5.) Thus much as to the Evidence of Episcopacy. But now as to the Importance of it. Ther is nothing of more Importance to any Society than Government. It is Necessary, and of the very Essence of a Society, without which no Number of Men cou'd be a Society. Therefore Government is Absolutely Necessary, and the most of any other thing, to the Church, as a Church, that is, as a Society. And the Preservation of the Faith and Doctrin of the Church, depends, under God, most Chiefly in the Support of the Government of the Church, that is, in supporting her as a Society. Whence she is call'd in Scripture the Pillar and Ground of the Truth. And where her Disciplin fails, ther is an open Door for all Errors and Heresies to Creep in, as the Experience of our own as well as of former Ages has Instructed us. And as it is in all other Governments, the Laws lose their force, and are forgotten, where the Power of the Governors is Cramp'd and Over-And.

(6.) *Country-m.* But the Dissenters have Government in what they call their Churches, for they are Societies, and, as you say, every Society must have Government.

Rehears. As every Society must have Government, so no Society or Corporation can have any other than what is Prescrib'd to them by their Charter, Granted to them by the first Institutor and Founder of their Corporation.

Suppose a Mobb shou'd Rise up in London, and Suppose some of the Common-Council or Aldermen shou'd Join with them, and they shou'd make a new Regulation of their Charter, and instead of One Lord Mayor shou'd set up Ten, and make a new Division of their Wards, and set over them whom they pleas'd; and if this shou'd Prevail for many years together, wou'd all this make them a Lawful Government? Might not the King justly bring a *Quo Warranto*

against such a Corporation, who Acted from no Authority but their own, and had Quite Alter'd, that is, Annul'd the Charter he had given them? For all Authority must be Deriv'd from some Superior, till we come to God himself; from whom all Authority in Heaven and Earth is Deriv'd. All other Authority is Rebellion against God, and Usurping of his Prerogative.

If Korah had Prevail'd against Aaron ther had been Government still, and it had been only Changing the Object, that Korah had been the High-Priest instead of Aaron, and who knows but he was as Capable of it as Aaron, and as Good a Man, bating his Rebellion? But you see how God Judg'd this Case, and that it was over-turning all Government by taking it off its true Foundation and Basis, as being Deriv'd from God, and Subsisting upon His Authority.

Country-m. This indeed is a Parallel Case to that of Presbyters throwing off their Bishops, and setting up a New Government and a new Regulation of their own. And by the same Rule that they Broke off from their Bishops, others Broke off from them, and wou'd have neither Bishops nor Presbyters, but every Man, Woman and Child took upon them the Sacred Office, and thought it no Usurpation!

Rehears. The Priests of Jeroboam had Government. And they were Ten to Two of the Tribes. Yet the Ten were the Schismatics, because they did it in Opposition to that Priesthood which God had Ordained. So that we are not to Reckon the Truth by Numbers. Else Mahomet wou'd have the Better of Christianity. But thank God the Presbyterians have not yet that Argument to Bragg of.

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